



Compliments of
ASSEMBLYMEMBER
Wilmer Amina Carter

District Office:

335 N. Riverside Avenue
Rialto, CA 92376
(909) 820-5008
Fax: (909) 820-5098

Capitol Office:

State Capitol, P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0062
(916) 319-2062
Fax: (916) 319-2162

E-mail:

Assemblymember.Carter@assembly.ca.gov

Website:

www.assembly.ca.gov/carter

Assembly Website:

www.assembly.ca.gov

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How to Apply for College



California State Assembly
Wilmer Amina Carter
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, 62ND DISTRICT

Dear Prospective College Student,

Preparing and applying to college can be a complicated process.

In order to guide you through the process, I am offering this brochure for your convenience. Included in this pamphlet are timelines, tips on writing the admissions essay, and a list of useful phone numbers and websites.

I hold education as one of my top priorities and support efforts to extend educational opportunities to everyone. Please take advantage of this brochure and use it as your map to a successful future.

If you need further assistance with preparing and applying for college or financial aid, please do not hesitate to contact my district office.

Sincerely,

Wilmer Amina Carter

WILMER AMINA CARTER

Member of the State Assembly
62nd District

Why Consider College?

A college degree can open doors and provide many opportunities. A college education means:

Enhanced Knowledge

A college education will increase a person's ability to understand developments in academia and in society, think abstractly and critically, express thoughts clearly in speech and in writing, and make wise decisions. These skills are useful both on and off the job. A college education also helps students learn how to think critically and analyze information.

Greater Potential

A college education can help increase a person's understanding of the community, the nation, and the world – as he or she explores interests, discovers new areas of knowledge, considers lifelong goals, and becomes a responsible citizen. A college education also provides greater knowledge of and appreciation for different ideas, philosophies, cultures, and people.

A college education provides students with an increased network of references for a future career. What students do in college is as important as their grades because the contacts and friends they make will be the people who support them when they begin to look for a job.

Increased Job Opportunities

The world is changing rapidly. Many jobs rely on new technology and already require more brain power than muscle power. In a person's working life, more and more jobs will require education beyond high school. A college education will increase the number and variety of jobs from which a person can choose. A college degree is synonymous with higher income, a better standard of living, and a more satisfying job.

More Money

Overall, a person who attends college earns more than a person who does not attend college.

Your Timeline

The dates below are general deadlines. Please check with each college admissions office for their specific deadlines.

Freshman & Sophomore Year

- Become involved with extracurricular activities and take on leadership positions.
- Begin developing efficient studying techniques.
- Take courses in preparation for college.

Junior Year

- Take the PSAT in the fall.
- Take the SAT or ACT, and SATII in the spring.

Senior Year

AUGUST

- Colleges mail applications to interested students.

SEPTEMBER

- Write and rewrite your personal statements.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

- Take the ACT or SAT.
- CSS Financial Aid Profile Registration deadline for early admissions.
- Begin submitting college applications (check each college campus for their early and regular decision application deadlines).

DECEMBER

- Decisions mailed to early decision applicants.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY

- Deadline for CSS Financial Aid Profile Application for regular admissions.
- Deadline for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Reply deadline for admitted early decision students.

APRIL

- Decisions mailed to all regular decision applicants.
- Some colleges provide notification of financial aid awards in the same mailing.
- Attend on-campus programs for admitted students.

MAY

- Reply deadlines for admitted regular decision students.

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

- Attend on-campus orientation programs.
- Congratulations on your matriculation.

The Admissions Essay

Along with your academic record and test scores, the admissions essay serves as another important aspect of your college application. It allows the admissions officer to see the personal side of you and how much you can contribute to the college or university.

Below are some suggestions to make your admissions essay successful:

- Answer the question. That's really important.
- Write naturally, but concisely.
- Use proper grammar and punctuation.
- Personalize your essay as much as possible. Allow your personality to shine through.
- Provide details to keep the story colorful. Use your normal, everyday vocabulary.
- Write about your own unique, funny, interesting experiences.
- Be honest.
- Tell a story in a relaxed, conversational style.
- Use humor.

- Convey a positive message (avoid cynicism).
- Write about topics you are passionate about.
- Use analogies to convey your message.
- Use logical paragraph breaks.
- Use the active voice.
- Use a large font that is easy to read.
- Proofread several times and get feedback from valued sources.

Avoid the following:

- Don't oversell yourself or try too hard.
- Don't rehash information that can be found elsewhere in the application package.
- Don't write a scholarly or overly academic paper.
- Don't appear overly idealistic or preachy. Avoid essays on "world peace."
- Don't try to explain blemishes on your record.
- Don't discuss dysfunctional family issues.
- Don't use trite, tired themes for the focus of the essay. Be original.
- Don't use large, pretentious words. Put away the thesaurus.
- Don't overuse adjectives.
- Don't be boring and monotonous.
- Don't be gimmicky.



Useful Phone Numbers:

American College Testing Program (ACT)
(319) 337-1270

College Board (PSAT, SAT, and SATII)
(800) 239-5888

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
(800) 433-3243

Useful Websites:

www.act.org— Register on-line for the American College Test

www.hecaonline.org— Provides information for parents, students, and counselors

www.collegeboard.org— Register online for the SAT and SATII tests, and the College Scholarship Service Profile

www.collegenet.com— Contains an online database of colleges with related information

www.fafsa.ed.gov— Register online for the FAFSA

fastweb.com— Contains an online database of privately sponsored scholarships

www.finaid.org— Provides general information on financial aid

www.csumentor.edu— Download applications for CSU schools

www.ucop.edu— Download applications for the UC System

www.commonapp.org— Download the Common Application

Education Pays!

A college education can increase your earning power. Individuals who complete college degree receive 72% more in wages than those with only a high school degree.

Source: Center for Public Education 2006